

SCIENCE & EDUCATION Impact

Benefits from USDA/Land-Grant Partnership

Stimulating Community Economic Growth Surviving in economically distressed times.

The economic stability is declining in some U.S. communities as traditional job markets shrink and unemployment rises. Communities need economic development programs that generate jobs, income, and local revenue. The land-grant universities and USDA are working together to address rural and urban concerns with small business workshops, strategic planning, and workforce preparation programs to improve local economic conditions.

Payoff

- **Without jobs, they will leave.** Job losses and restructuring forced North Carolina to compete with other states in attracting new companies. **North Carolina State** Extension developed an economic model to estimate the economic impact of using state business incentives to attract new businesses. The state Department of Commerce uses this model, which showed that seven incentive funded projects generated nearly \$75 million. Town leaders tackling local concerns and investment opportunities learned strategic planning skills from **Purdue** Extension. The effort helped 130 community leaders and business owners identify nine priority issues and raise more than \$1 million to fund an industrial site. The group also received a \$23,500 grant to establish a farmers market that generates \$1,000 a week.
- **Economic diversity.** In **Arizona** Extension staff from Yavapai and Navajo counties provided the Hopi tribe with strategic planning, marketing, and computer skills to foster economic development. Thirty-five Hopi adults and youth marketed jewelry via the Internet, and tribal members held an art show generating \$100,000 in revenue for 56 artisans. The tribe designated \$2,000 for a Hopi-run nonprofit organization and saved artists about \$56,000 by hosting the show on the reservation. Maine's Native American tribal communities are in rural areas where poverty and unemployment are high. **Maine** joined with USDA, Maine Department of Transportation, and Four Directions Development Corp. to teach 25 members of the Maliseet and Micmac tribes entrepreneurship and leadership skills to start businesses.
- **Small business success.** Starting a small business is tough if you can't develop ideas and secure financing. **Louisiana State** Extension's Starting A Business ... Is

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It For You? helped one participant start a business and another expand. A participant fearing job loss started a part-time Internet business that provides half as much of the income as he earns from his full-time job. To meet employer demands and encourage minorities to pursue their own businesses, **Alabama** Extension worked with a local chamber of commerce to provide a Franchise Entrepreneurship Workshop for 200 minority individuals. As a result, 10 percent of the participants started their own businesses, and five people plan to open a franchise. One attendee is selling greeting cards to Wal-Mart, while another started a mobile telephone service. At **South Carolina State**, a Small Business Workshop Series taught 22 small business owners and entrepreneurs business planning, marketing, bookkeeping, employee management, and technology solutions. Seven of the small business owners who attended plan to use these skills to operate more effectively. In Oklahoma, **Langston University's** Rural Business Program provided entrepreneurship training, business plan preparation, and grant writing assistance in an effort to build community infrastructure and create business opportunities for rural citizens.

- **Community leaders.** Rural communities need trained leaders to identify community economic development strategies for the future. A statewide **West Virginia** Extension leadership education program targeted economic developers, county planning commissions, and town officials. Extension helped community programs obtain more than \$3.5 million to fund a road for a new industrial park, improve a farmers market, and repair two homes devastated by flood. **Kansas State** Extension teamed with the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development program to fund 23 mini-grants to train community leaders in conflict resolution, issue analysis, and communication issues. Each \$200 grant supported leadership training on the county level.
- **Technology solutions.** Welfare recipients are better prepared to enter the job market after completing a four-week workforce development course offered by **Ohio State** Extension and the Godman Guild. Job readiness training, keyboarding, and Internet skills helped 58 people get a job. **Montana State** with **Nevada** and **Hawaii** Extension are teaming to develop a computer program to match communities with prospective new employers.

- **Committed to serve.** Interested in helping communities increase small business startups, **Nebraska's** Rural Initiative partnered with the university's honors program to promote technology in rural communities to help small businesses increase revenue. Through the partnership, one student intern produced a marketing CD in collaboration with 25 community volunteers, saving one town \$20,000. **Kentucky State** Extension involved 150 rural residents in a series of town meetings and community forums to develop a video showing how rural communities can stimulate economic development. Poverty and unemployment are often issues that prevent economic success. **Vermont** Extension's Expanding the Caring Community project taught more than 1,800 youth and adults community awareness and involvement skills through participation in volunteer programs. In five years, adults and youth donated 59,866 hours of service worth \$479,000 to rural communities.

- **Breaking down barriers.** **Alabama** Extension launched a Hispanic/Latino Initiative to provide Web-based links to Spanish educational materials to ease the transition into community life for newcomers. Extension established a diversity council to address language and cultural differences and hired a bilingual agent to conduct programs. Twenty-three food service workers with limited English language skills passed a food safety certification test that extension taught in Spanish. Examining states heavily dependent on seasonal workers such as California, Colorado, Washington, Utah, and Texas, **Colorado State** researchers found that Hispanic workers are meeting seasonal production and harvesting employment demands and contributing to the local economy.



**Cooperative State Research, Education,
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